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TV blames U.S. for Arab terrorism

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WERE there some shred of a sense of justice remaining to the United Nations, it would convene a special assembly giving thanks to the state of Israel — without which its doings would be forever shrouded in that indifference with which the public, quite sensibly, greets news of the organization.

For how, without its periodic efforts to condemn Israel, could the Security Council ever make itself the focus of such prime time attention, so many columns of print, as we witnessed this week: a week in which the U.S. vetoed yet another council resolution condemning Israel?

Immediately on the heels of the U.S. action we learned, thanks to a host of analyses, of the imminent peril in which American embassies and personnel now found themselves.

This we heard in newscast after newscast, heady with suggestion that the U.S. had, for unfathomable reasons, chosen to endanger its citizens abroad by inciting terrorists in the Arab world.

Nowhere, indeed, was this view plainer than in the commentary of NBC's John Chancellor, who on Wednesday evening undertook to amplify various threats being made this week by terrorists — and who appealed to Americans to recognize the way in which "American interests" were endangered by U.S. and Israeli policies.

Here we are in the presence of a theme which should sound familiar to anyone tuned in to the general tenor of the opposition raised nowadays toward those administration policies reflecting a sense of national resolve: Star Wars, the effort to preserve Central America, a strong defense posture.

How often have we not been told in recent weeks that in arming the contras we — as a network correspondent put it a while back — "lose the moral high ground"?

May we digress for a moment to wonder on what grounds a nation can be accused of losing the moral high ground when it has within its borders, as we have, folk such as The Friends of the Third World Inc. — a group, the Washington Post informs us, dedicated to importing the Sandinistas' coffee, purchasers of which are enjoined on the label, "Enjoy your cup of coffee as you work to build a better world."

Now it is advised that American policy in the UN be shaped according to the dictates of terrorists: for there can be no other interpretation of the intelligence to be heard from our anchor booths and other pundits, following this week's UN vote.

In concert with this din, the Today Show brought us yesterday morning the wife of a minister held by terrorists in Lebanon: a witness who advised us, after prompting by anchorman John Palmer, that the U.S. veto had put in mortal danger her husband and all other Americans held captive in Lebanon.

The terrorists, we were also informed, were but trying — by kidnaping and similar acts of brutality — to make themselves heard.

We have, of course, have listened to such stuff before — and from sources less easily understandable than the wife of one still-held hostage.

Nor can poor John Palmer be held much to account for reciting what is, after all, the prevailing wisdom of the newsroom, a belief recited day in and day out: the belief that terrorism is but a response to us, that it is a result of American policy, the answer of those who have failed to win a fair hearing from the U.S., who would, indeed, otherwise choose happily to live in peace and friendship with us.

Such are the explanations we hear now of those Shiite fanatics setting off car bombs in Lebanon. Such did we hear, indeed, during our year-long hostage ordeal in

Iran. And it is for that ordeal — for our timidity and irresolution in the face of the Ayatollah's thugs — that we are paying the price today.

The bill has come in for the irresoluteness which failed to exact retribution for a year-long act of terror: and the cost a few years later was the bombing of the Marine barracks and the death of more than 250 U.S. servicemen.

Who can forget the sight of the PLO, dressed in American running suits and waving V for victory, while U.S. troops escorted them safely out of Lebanon — in effect rescuing the PLO from the invading Israeli army?

Who can forget the outcries when U.S. naval guns at long last responded to attacks on American positions in Lebanon by shelling enemy gun emplacements: outcries best exemplified by John Chancellor's grim charge that the U.S. was using "firepower equal to that used during the D-day invasion."

One should inquire into the nature of a mind that could find in the action of one aircraft carrier firing into the Shouf Mountains the equivalent of the firepower used, as Chancellor so earnestly informed a national audience, on D-Day: which saw the greatest armada ever known to history, consisting of 1213 warships, including seven battleships, 23 cruisers and 105 destroyers — not to mention the firepower of 512 bombers.

Nor are the Israelis themselves likely to forget the similarly unhinged responses which followed when — after an attack on a school bus in which Israeli children were murdered — the Israeli Defense Forces pursued the attackers into southern Lebanon.

And who will not long remember, above all, our response to the murder of two American consular officials a few short years ago? First the PLO killed the Americans — following which the same PLO graciously consented to arrange "safe pas-

sage" so that the bodies of the dead could be transported home.

At this high moment in our history, the Carter administration responded with lavish praise for the PLO and innumerable expressions of thanks for this humanitarian gesture.

Should anyone be surprised if the PLO and its allies in murder took the proper lesson from this bizarre behavior: namely that, to their growing string of victories, won by acts of unpunished terror against a great power, they could now add another: the spectacle of that same great power demeaning itself before them?

It has fallen not only to the U.S., of course, to learn the high cost attaching to appeasement of this kind.

The French chose to protect terrorist Abu Iyad, architect of the Munich massacre — and for this were rewarded with a string of terror operations in the heart of Paris. With the first shows of toughness from the Mitterrand government, those operations ceased.

The Israelis have learned early and well one of the simpler facts of our times, if one which has, nonetheless, posed a monumental task for great nations to absorb: namely, that those who accede to terror inevitably become its victims.